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ABSTRACT

This report offers a commentary on the recent development of community colleges in Shanghai (China). The seven institutions were established in the early 1990s to provide community education to local residents in hopes of facilitating mass higher education in China. The report describes important characteristics the colleges seek to impart including: open access, community orientation, adaptability to changing societal and educational needs, and cooperation with four-year institutions. The institutions originated from different efforts, and Changning and Luwan Community Colleges and the College of Continuous Education are highlighted to show the various origins. Some colleges were established by neighborhoods, others by the government, and still others are the result of merging previous adult education institutions together. While the reasons and purposes for these colleges are real and defined, the community colleges in Shanghai face financial, curricular, and administrative challenges. The report specifies a lack of certificate and transfer policy, inadequate funding, low name recognition, and a poor level and quality of education as current problems. It concludes by offering recommendations, such as standardizing the development and management of community colleges and experimenting with the transfer function, for the future expansion of community colleges. (JCC)

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Tao Benyi

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Community Colleges in Shanghai

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Prepared text of a talk given at
The American Association of Community Colleges Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, USA,
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(USCEF/CCIC sponsored forum)

1. The development of community education in Shanghai

Currently Shanghai has a system of two levels of government, municipal and district, but three levels of administration, i.e, municipal, district and neighborhood, the last one being the closest to Shanghai residents. Community colleges are set up at the district level; community schools are set up at the neighborhood level. The format of community colleges, the content of the education they provide, as well as class scheduling are all based on residents'practic al needs. Community education in Shanghai generally starts from community schools. Different classes are developed based on the different needs of residents with different educational background in the community. They can be classified into the following types:

Skill–oriented: Most of these classes are for people who have lost their jobs, with the purpose of training them for new employment.

Knowledge-oriented: These classes are to meet the need of some residents who want to re-build their knowledge structure. Examples are computer classes, English language classes, and equity investment classes.

Interest-oriented: These classes are to satisfy the personal interests and hobbies of some residents, particularly elder people. Examples are piano and music classes, calligraphy classes, and flower arrangement classes.

Fitness and Health-oriented: These include different types of fitness and health classes. Examples are Taiji and Pingpong classes.

Most of the above classes are focused and practical, with flexible and varied formats. Teachers for these classes come from the community, and they are experts in their respective fields. Most of them are not paid or just paid a nominal fee for teaching these classes, so fees are low for the classes and they are very popular with residents. But we can find the following problems with these classes:

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1. The content of each class is very narrow. There are no relations among different classes and the education hence is not systematic.

2. Participants of these classes are mainly the general public from a community. There is not much consideration of providing education for the youth, particularly systematic education of specialized knowledge and skills.

3. Community schools are yet to be integrated into the general education system.

Toward a Learning Society

The development of our society and economy is putting more and more demands on people, making them more and more aware of the importance of lifelong learning. As the result, Shanghai is gradually developing into a learning oriented society, which, in turn, puts greater demands on the education system. This is particularly true with general higher education and vocational higher education. Since the governments cannot financially support the size of higher education that fits with Shanghai's economic and social development, building community colleges undoubtedly is a critically important way out. Community education, as an important part of the education system, serves the function of supplementing and completing higher education. Establishing community colleges is the necessary requirement for making higher education available to the masses.

The nature of a community college, based on China's current national conditions and Shanghai's situations, is "an educa tional institution that operates on its own under the governance of a Board of Directors, and serves the community it is in. It is under the jurisdiction of the governments'educational departments, and sponsored by district and county governments. It relies on four year colleges and universities, and has society's participation". The purpose of building community colleges is to create a new operating model that serves the need of community development. A community college relies on its community, serves its community, and contributes to the development of that community. It emphasizes education that leads to all types of certificates, including education attainment certificates, job competency certificates as well as other certificates. It serves and subordinates itself to the varied learning needs of the residents in its community as well as the community's economic and cultural development.

The functions of community colleges are:

1. *Higher vocational and technical education*. Programs of study are set up based on society's needs, so students can quickly find jobs after they graduate.

2. *Two-year college education*, or the part of general education in a regular four year college curriculums. This function is only being planned currently.

3. Adult and lifetime education.

The characteristics of community colleges:

1. *Openness.* Community colleges, by drawing on the system of examination for the self-taught and the system of adult education, accept students without requiring the national college entrance examination score. Instead, only high school graduation certificates and transcripts, or the equivalents of them, are needed for admission. There is no limit on age or gender. This provided a student, who has failed to reach the minimum score on the national college entrance examination, with the opportunity for higher education, and the opportunity to get a three year college education certificate if he/she passes the college's final tests on some courses, and the national education attainment certificate examination on other courses. The inexpensive tuition and fee charged by community colleges can eliminate the barrier caused by geography or social-economic status, enabling students from poor areas or from low-income families who otherwise would not be able to enter higher education institutions to have the opportunity to get higher education.

2. *Community orientation.* From an economic and social perspective, community colleges train and guides most of the youths to work and live in their communities after they graduate so they can contribute to their communities. Community colleges also provide for their communities all kinds of adult education, as they have incorporated the previous adult education categories of employees'university, after -work university, TV university and others. This enables community college to satisfy not only the learning needs of all sorts of working people by helping them upgrade their knowledge and improve their professional skills, but also the learning needs of the unemployed, the housewives as well as the retired by helping them learn new technologies, gain job opportunities or enrich their lives, therefore contributing to the development of the communities.

3. *High adaptability.* As the programs and curriculums in four year colleges and universities change continuously, community colleges also change their programs and curriculums accordingly, so students who wish to go on with higher education will be prepared to adapt to learning in four year colleges and the third and fourth years in a college. For students who want to go directly into the workforce or employees who wish to upgrade their knowledge, community colleges are capable of adapting completely to the rapid development of science, technology and production by continuously adding to and updating their vocational programs and curriculums. At the same time, community colleges can train people for all types of middle level positions based on the needs of the communities.

4. *Cooperativeness.* A prominent characteristic of community college development in Shanghai is the close cooperation with four year colleges and universities. Jinshan Community College, for example, relies on the resources of Eastern China Institute of Technology and Institute of Petrochemicals. Changning Community College has cooperation contracts with colleges such as Chinese Institute of Textiles for its operation and development. Zhabei Community College relies on Shanghai University, Nanshi Community College relies on Tongji University and Luwan Community College relies on

Shanghai Normal University. The participation of four year colleges and universities, and standardized administration raised the quality of community education. At the same time, the reliance of community colleges on four year colleges and universities also put demands on the deepening of these school reforms.

II. Types of Community Colleges and the Characteristics of Their Education

Community colleges in Shanghai were created at the beginning of the 1990s. Several years of experimentation have led to the establishment of 7 community colleges, including Jinshan, Changning, Nanshi, Luwan, Zhabei and Jingan, and these colleges have over time developed their own distinctive characteristics. Currently there are several types of community colleges in Shanghai as specified below:

1. Community colleges which are the result of merging the previous TV university, night university, after-work university, teachers' training college, as well as 2 -year vocational colleges. Examples are Changning Community College and Jingan Community College.

2. Community colleges which transformed themselves from colleges directly under and operated by a state-owned enterprise. Jinshan Community College is an example.

3. Community colleges which are established by neighborhoods.

4. Various types of schools established by the private sector.

5. Community colleges which are jointly established by the government, 4-year colleges and other institutions. Luwan Community College is an example.

6. Various training schools established and operated by 4-year colleges and universities. The Teachers'Training College of Shanghai Teachers' University is one example.

Here are two detailed examples. One is Changning Community College, which is the result of combining various schools previously existed in the community. The other is Luwan Community College, which is jointly established by the government, 4-year colleges and other institutions.

The preparation work for Changning Community College started in 1993. In 1997, after being approved by Shanghai Peoples' Government, and filing with the National Education Commission, it went into experimentation stage.

Changning Community College is the result of merging 6 district level educational institutions including the previous After-work University, Education College, an employee secondary vocational school, a vocational high school and others. The district government invested 45 million Yuan to build the 20,000 square meter campus, and to put in new equipment. Other than the main campus, the college has three separate

schools: Education School, which provides continuous education for teachers; Adult Education School, which provides middle level and various employee training programs and certificate programs, and Higher Education School, which provides 3-year vocational education to prepare students for employment and higher vocational education. Changning Community College has the following characteristics: its education fits with the needs of an urban region's economic, social and cultu ral development, as well as the social development goal of that region. The programs of the college focus on training students in the areas of foreign trade, real estate management, tourism, advertising, and traditional national cultures. The main campus of Changning Community College has over 4000 students, while the three schools together enroll over 6000 students, making a total student population of 10,000. The college has over time started 3 higher vocational training programs, 1 program to move vocational students into undergraduate programs, 1 program to move secondary vocational students directly into higher vocational programs, and various other kinds of adult higher and secondary education programs. Employee education programs are also flourishing.

Changning Community College adopts the financing model of utilizing multiple sources of funding, i.e. money from the municipal and district governments, donations from society, as well as students tuition and fees. Combining and re-organizing various previous educational resources led to a new institution – Changning Community College.

Luwan Community College was established only recently. It has been sponsored by the Ford Foundation and assisted by the US-China Education Foundation in its operation. Shanghai Teachers'University, a comprehensive higher education institution which has been devoting itself to the mission of education serving the society, entrusted the Sociology Department of its College of Humanities to participate in the creation of Luwan. Luwan was jointly created by Shanghai Teachers'University and Civil Affairs Bureau of Luwan district government. It is a comprehensive school, with serving the development of Luwan community as its mission. It is governed by a College Affairs Committee, and the President of the college is responsible for its day-to-day operation. Committee members and the President are nominated through joint consultation. The major functions of Luwan Community Colleges are: 1) to serve the political and economic development as well as the cultural life of Luwan district through, for example, short term single subject tutoring classes which fit the needs of the community; 2) to train community social workers and other social workers through, for example, workshops for neighborhood workers on how a neiborhood committee functions; 3) to develop vocational education, adult education and other types of continuous education programs such as adult college entrance examination preparation classes for unemployed youth who want to take the adult college entrance examination; 4) to consult with the government departments in charge of education on experimenting with setting up the transfer system when the appropriate time comes.

Luwan Community College functions mainly through after-work classes, and through some other formats like group training and training in rotation. For some training programs, once a student finishes all the coursework required by the program and passes the necessary tests, a graduation certificate will be issued jointly by Community Social

Workers' Association and Shanghai Teachers' University. Programs qualified for graduation certificates currently are mainly those for training community social workers. Courses in these programs include Introduction to Social Work, Study of the Elderly in the Community, Healthy Mentality, Community Management Through Computers, etc. Under Luwan's current operating model, Luwan District Civil Affairs Bureau is responsible for providing funding and recruiting students from the district, while Shanghai Teachers' University is responsible for providing teachers and curriculums. Luwan Community College is still at its early stage, it is not yet large, and its education quality not yet high, with mainly the single educational format of training. As time changes and through our efforts, we believe Luwan Community College will mature and develop.

III. The contribution to community education by Shanghai Teachers' University and its College of Continuous Education

The College of Continuous Education of Shanghai Teachers' University has been involved in adult education for nearly 20 years. It offers all types of adult education programs at various levels. Under the college, there are the Office of the Night University, the Office of Examination for the Self-Taught, the Office of Training and the Colleges' Central Office. The night university currently offers 36 programs at both higher vocational and 4 year college levels; the Office of Examination for the Self-taught covers the 4 core majors defined by the examination system; and over 10 training programs including various college entrance examination review and short term training classes are offered by the Office of Training. The mission of the College of Continuous Education is, to develop, based on the economic and social development of the area the university is located in – Xuhui District, applied programs and curriculums, and strengthen the four year education, and at the same time, widen the scope of its service to meet the needs of other districts as well. Currently the night university has teaching locations in 10 districts and counties, including Yangpu, Hongkou, Luwan, Zhabei, Putong New District, Jiading and Fengxian. There are also over 20 teaching and training locations where people who are studying on their own can get tutoring and training sessions related to the examination for the self-taught. All these are to bring convenience to the students and to serve the communities. It is precisely because of these measures which deliver education to the doorsteps of people that the education attainments of elementary and kindergarten teachers in these communities went up a level, that the employees working in these communities developed special skills and performed better in their positions, that the residents of the communities, regardless of their ages and education, eventually earned their graduation certificates for the self-taught, that those who failed the national college entrance examination entered, the year after, regular colleges and universities or adult after-work colleges, that those who lost their jobs learned new skills and technologies and gained the opportunities to go back to work. The annual enrollment in the College of Continuous Education has been increasing in large scale. In 2000, enrollment was 1,365, 3 times of the 1999 number. Currently the college has over 2,100 students, and it plans to recruit 2,200 students this year, which means that new recruitment will be more than the number of enrolled students. The number of people registered for the examination for the self-taught has also been increasing steadily.

The current number stands at nearly 20,000. It can be said that the College of Continuous Education has made its share of contribution to the community's economic, cultural and industrial development.

The main problems in building and developing of community colleges in Shanghai:

1. *The lack of policy support in two areas: certificates and transfer*. The biggest problem in the development of community colleges is that a community college does not have the independent power to issue certificates. The current community college is similar to a private education institution, the types of education it offers are either the transplants of education policies regarding private higher education institutions by the governments' education departments (for example, national education attainment certificate examination), or the retention of the previous education categories (after-work university, TV University, etc.), plus the categories of tutoring for the examination for the self-taught, and tutoring for certificate examinations. In other words, the content of a community colleges' formal education is very thin. The fact that community c olleges do not have actual autonomy in running themselves has severely limited its further development.

2. *The lack of private funding and support.* Community colleges rely on multiple sources of funding, but funding from private sources is not yet stable. The key lies in establishing the reward mechanism, i.e. there should be direct relationship between private funding and benefits the funding sources receive. Otherwise it would be very hard to maintain long term flow of funding from private sources.

3. *Low name recognition.* The lack of promotion led to the lack of understanding of community colleges by the society. Community colleges have low name recognition, and there are only a few of them. So they do not have much influence.

4. The level and quality of education by community colleges have not caught up with the economic development of communities. The short history of community colleges, as well as the lack of full support from the district means that the programs offered by community colleges and teachers'recruitment/training are behind the need of the communities'economic development. The instructional methods and equipment also lag behind the needs of students.

The direction of future development of community colleges in Shanghai

1. Policy guarantee. Most importantly, community colleges should be granted the power to issue certificates independently, including all types of formal education and training program certificates, so community residents can obtain certificates that are recognized by society after they study in a community college and pass the necessary tests.

2. *Standardize the building and development of community colleges.* Community colleges are part of our national higher education system, hence should be developed

based on the standards for higher education institutions. They should be developed based on the reality of Shanghai's economic, social and educational development.

3. *Standardize the management of community colleges and raise the educational quality.* A community college should set up its own board of directors and establish the system of governance by the board and administration by the president's office. It should be staffed with administrators with good
political quality and managerial skills, and a stable core of teachers whose specialties correspond to the colleges' programs and curriculums. The goal is to eventually build a team of teachers who are both lecturers and engineers.

4. *Strengthen promotional efforts, and attract communities to participate.* The development of community colleges requires the increase in their name recognition, which in turn requires the governments to promote them, as the governments can be most effective in that regard. The development of community colleges also requires the support and participation of various aspects of the society. First, the district government should pay attention to the development of community colleges and integrate that matter into the development plan of the district. Secondly, enterprises located in the district should support community colleges and provide help in financing and training matters. Community colleges, at the same time, should train skilled people needed by these companies. Thirdly, the participation of residents of the community will make a community college the real center of educational, scientific, cultural as well as informational exchanges for the community, and the important place for building the community's spiritual progress.

5. *Experiment with transfer system.* At the same time as we are trying to improve community colleges, we should experiment with the transfer system. This should have a positive effect in pushing for the reform and development of our national higher education system. In order for community colleges to get forceful support, special privileges should be given to community colleges in various areas of education, and absolute status granted to community colleges in the area of transfer, so certificates issued by community colleges will be authoritative in the community.

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